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*"Blest be the Light that shows the Way,  
And blest the Way the Light has shown!"*

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# FIVE POINTS OF FAITH

BY

CHARLES GORDON AMES

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE DISCIPLES, BOSTON



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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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On the walls of many Unitarian churches and Sunday-school rooms hangs a large square of card-board, bearing these words : —

### OUR FAITH.

WE BELIEVE IN  
THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD;  
THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN;  
THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS;  
SALVATION BY CHARACTER;  
THE PROGRESS OF MANKIND ONWARD AND UPWARD FOREVER

“Such will be the theology of the Church of the Future, which will be emancipated from ritualism, dogmatism, and sectarianism, and will possess more and more of the mind and heart of Christ Jesus.” So wrote James Freeman Clarke, who formulated what he called these “Five Points of the New Theology” in a sermon preached May 10, 1885, in the Church of the Disciples, Boston, and printed and reprinted in America and England. The title presents it as a contrast to those Five Points of Calvinism “which have been the main and essential doctrines of Orthodoxy in the past.”

Dr. Clarke saw the Divine Word “revealed in creation, embodied in Christ, and immanent in the human soul”;

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taught by Jesus, not as a definite system, but as an ever-unfolding principle ; not as something we are to grow out of, but as something we are ever to grow into ; and, *because* it is a living and growing germ, it has "no finality in any of its past forms."

Many of us regard this simple statement as so compact of spiritual verity, vitality, and sweet reasonableness as to make it "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness"; and we believe it will be helpful to sincere and inquiring souls who are looking for the city that hath foundations.

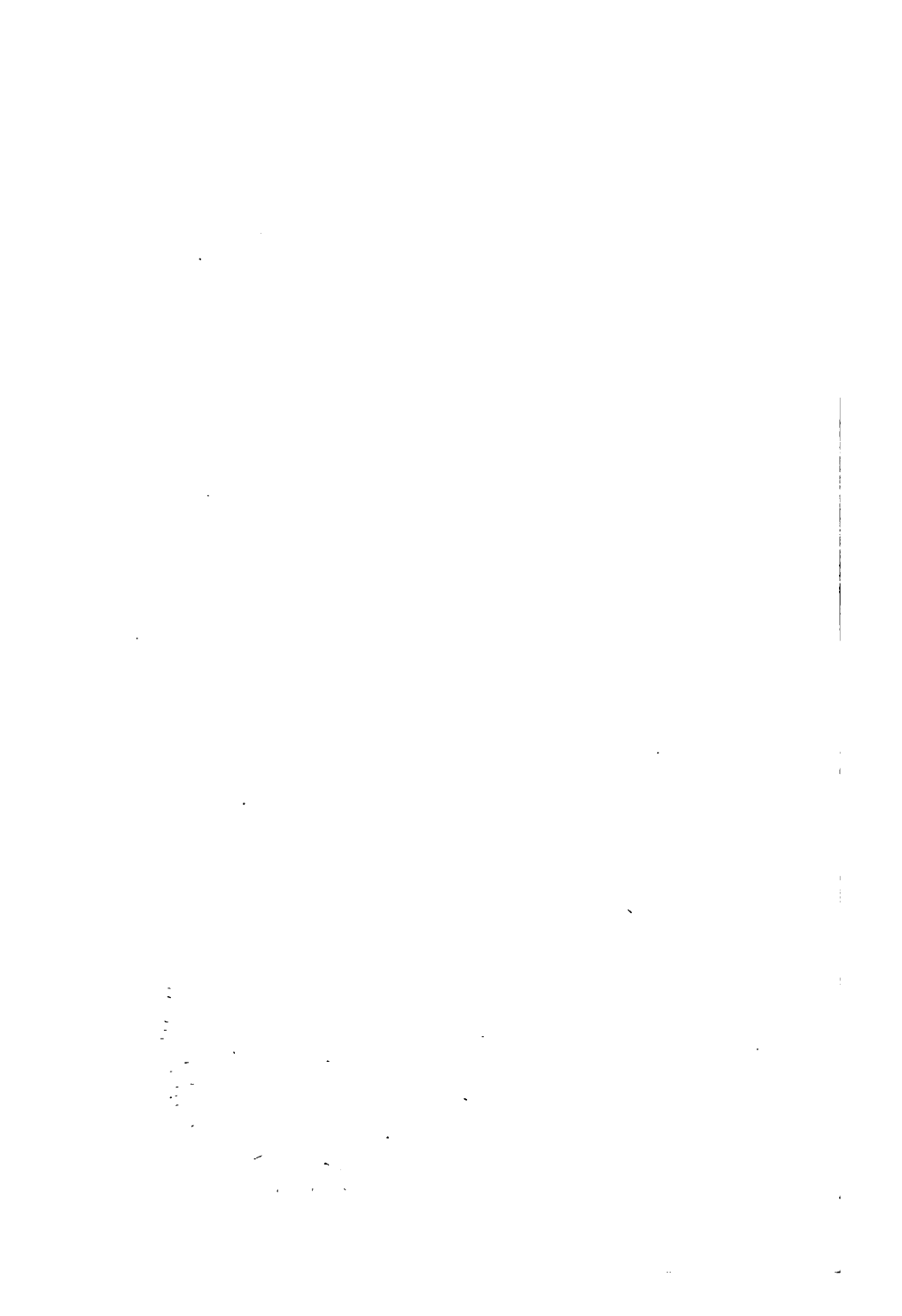
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The five discourses gathered into this little book were preached in the Church of the Disciples during November and December, 1902.

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## THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

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"I bow my knees unto the FATHER, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."— EPH. iii. 14 (Rev. Version).

THESE are words of light and power. They offer us no dead and empty theory of theism, but the Living God, in warm and loving relations to us all, as born to be sharers of his nature. They bring before us a vision of the spiritual universe as a home, and of the countless multitude of beings who inhabit it — in whatever part of the infinite realm they dwell — as belonging to one household, all bearing the name of one Father, because, even though they know him not, they are known to him as sons and daughters. The mansions are many ; the family is one.

The end of the apostle's toil and prayer, like that of his great Master, is "to make all men see" this blessed mystery of the Fatherhood,— a mystery hidden from the ages (along with many another waiting wonder), but now made manifest by the appearance of one great Son of God, who impressed those who knew him best as pre-eminent among many brethren. Paul thus sees Jesus as the Leader of a mighty procession which in the fulness of time will gather the spiritual creation into the unity of a Divine Humanity, that God may be all in all. Such is his grand conception of the eternal purpose that runs through the world's history.

Of Absolute Being we may not speak, for we cannot think. Unable as we are to fathom our own nature, how by searching can we find out God? In a very real and awful sense, he is hidden in impenetrable darkness and silence. No man hath seen him, nor can see. No image of the Infinite can be fixed or graven on our minds as an object of worship; nor is it probable that there is any *such* God as we fashion to ourselves, because the Reality must be inconceivably beyond our childish measurement. But his greatness adapts itself to our littleness. Of all the vast breadth of sunlight, one ray suffices for the human eye; of the seemingly boundless air, one breath at a time is enough for our life. Perhaps we may "know God" as we know any author or artist by his works, or as we know what infinity means, without being able to grasp it; or, better still, as a little child may know the parent.

Thus the High and Holy One, the Inhabitant of Eternity, may dwell and reveal himself in the lowly heart

"As shines the sunbeam in a drop of dew."

The God Absolute is above the reach of our puny thought, but the God Relative — the God with whom we have to do, because he has to do with us — is manifest in nature, in mind, in history, and in experience.

We cannot *think* him, but we think *about* him, because we must. And we can apprehend, or take hold of, that which we cannot comprehend, or take in. We feel after him, because we have unspeakable need. We did not make ourselves, and there must be a Maker. We cannot care for ourselves, and the world would be a bedlam if there were no Care-taker. How welcome,

then, is the message that this Maker and Benefactor is also our Father !

The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, whatever else it may include, appears to hold these implications :

1. That he is the only Source and Producer of Life, the exhaustless and ever-active Power behind evolution. Once there was no life on this planet. How did non-living matter ever become living? How did breath enter the forms which arose from the dust? How did the primal egg get laid, or the first vital cell get itself formed? Philosopher and scientist can give but one answer : "There is an infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed." To that Cause of all causes Jesus gives the name of Father.

2. That the Divine Love, being the Supreme Parentage, must be also the continuous and friendly Providence. It is just as impossible that we should live another minute by our own power as that we should have given ourselves life at first. This is the ground of our dependence. We have nothing, and can have nothing, which does not come to us as a gift. If some forms of good are placed within our reach, the very power to reach them is itself a gift. We are capable of self-help only as we are helped by "the Power *not* ourselves." The Maker keeps making us ; the Father keeps providing ; and he "knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him."

3. The fatherly guardianship includes impartial discipline. We are placed under a system of wise law and order. Man's freedom, within elastic limits, is a part of the order, and is necessary to his development as the child of such a Father. The Power which produces and

supplies whatever is necessary to welfare supplies also the faculties for the appreciation and appropriation of good. The Father keeps his human child at school. Retribution and redemption are two aspects of paternal care.

We are more closely related to God than to our human parents; for their life and ours is his life; so that he is more than Father and Mother of us all. Not merely because he brought into existence our remotest ancestors, and led the course of development from lower forms, but because he is now bringing us into existence. Something from him is in every heart-beat, every nervous vibration, every movement of body or mind.

Do we not feel, at every stage of our existence, that we are *capable of becoming* more than we are,—that we are born heirs of an inheritance not yet in our possession? This on-reaching *hope* is one sign that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us kingdoms and crowns when we grow to them.

The men of the Old Testament and some of the more advanced Greeks had come in sight of the Fatherhood of God, but it was rarely brought home to the private soul as a personal experience. The best ancient thought of the Deity made him, like a good king, the ruler, leader, and protector of his people as a whole.

Each tribe or nation had its own god. Any man who belonged to the tribe was supposed to be under that sacred authority and shelter. To forfeit the tribal or national relation was to be "cut off from among the people," to become an outcast and outlaw. A man without a city or a country was also without a god.

To the Israelites, Jehovah was a national deity, limited



and local, save to a few illuminated minds. At best Israel was his favorite, his chosen, his first-born, or his only begotten son. He could be approached by participating in the public ceremony, by visiting the temple, by sharing the sacrificial feast, by bringing a gift to the altar, as we pay our taxes.

The destruction of city and temple, the breaking up of the priesthood and the dispersion of the nation, must have thrown each man back on himself, and deepened a sense of personal need,—the need of a God nigh at hand. What a welcome message was this which encouraged the lowly and simple to enter into the closet, shut the door, and whisper, "Father" !

Systems of religion may be fairly graded by the significance they attach to their name for God. When the deepest impression the world made on the minds of men was a sense of power and awfulness, God was thought of as El Shaddai,— "God Almighty." When communities were gathered under the guidance and control of sovereigns, he was worshipped as King and as the national Chief. As the intelligence that goes to the making and management of the world grew more apparent, he was called the All-wise, the All-seeing. To the few whose moral sense was largely developed he was the Holy One, who required "truth in the inward parts." At last, One who felt the inward assurance of his own sonship uttered with new fulness of meaning the name "Father." And those who caught this spirit began to sing the new song, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God !"

"We are his offspring," sang the Greek poet Aratus,

two hundred years before Christ. Zeus or Jupiter had been pictured as "Father of gods and men," holding court on the summit of Olympus. But he was jealous and suspicious of his own family. Similar notions are traceable in the Hebrew writings. "Who among the gods is like unto Jehovah?" "God is jealous, and Jehovah revengeth." "The fear of the Lord" became the synonym for piety; and the commandment to love him must have seemed to the common mind a hard saying.

The doctrine of the Fatherhood may be very austere and repulsively presented. But inside the shell of an intellectual conception may there not be a sweet kernel on which the soul can feed? Are we offered merely a verbal formula, or is it the bread of life? Let us feel after the inner reality. Doctrine alone, however true, is like an unlighted lamp. We must explore and appropriate the truth with our hearts as well as with our intellect, that we may find those deep things of the spirit which are only spiritually discerned.

What would it mean to us — what would it *not* mean? — to be fully persuaded that the chief or highest use for which this earth exists is as the nursery and school of a race of beings who are to wear the image of God? That what we call Nature is the scene of his unceasing industry? That the bringing up of a family for himself is his purpose and habitual business? That to this end he provides, through their own activity, for their maintenance, instruction, discipline, opportunity, and moral inheritance?

Every theory of the world is beset with difficulties. But a purely materialistic conception seems to have become impossible. There is no ground for rationality

in a view which makes the universe irrational; no repose in a view which consigns us to helpless orphanage, uncared for by any wisdom or goodness beyond our own. But reason and our conscious need may join in welcoming the only view which makes the universe safe and friendly, and supplies a valid justification for its existence. "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." Can any lower faith suffice?

Now we come to inquire for the way by which the Father is found and known. Two of the Gospels attribute these words to Jesus: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him." Sayings at once luminous and mystical! Perhaps our own experience may give us the key. We do not find the deepest meanings in surface facts. We do not find our friends till friendship springs up in our own hearts. How should we find God except through sonship,—through the awakened sense of our kinship with him? And, as he is best known, so is he best shown, by the best men. Have we not found it easier to believe in the reality of goodness after seeing it made alive in good men and women? They are our benefactors, indeed: they reveal to us our own higher possibilities.

Dr. Bartol once said: "There are aspects of Nature which do not show us God. I do not know my friend by his back: I must see his face." Let us push the simile a little further. To know man or God, we must see the *heart*. Any human goodness gives us a hint of the higher kind; as if the heart of God were throbbing in any pure heart of man. So in a degree every son reveals the Father; and still more that Son who is most like him, or in whose heart the higher Heart beats most strongly.

Jesus himself thus reasons upward from human love to the divine: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall the heavenly Father?"

There must be something in man which answers to God,—responds to his touch. He has not left us without a witness. Our wisest thoughts cannot be very wise; but, when we try to think of God as Father and of man as his child, the thoughts that reach highest are likely to be truest. Ernest Crosby writes, "I know those best whom I have known only at their best." How low we sink when we let go our ideals! How we rise when we let them bear us upward!

We learn something from self-study. Our organs of sense correspond to something in the mind. It takes an eye to see, an ear to hear. Also something in the mind corresponds to the laws and truths of life. It takes a heart to feel, a mind to learn and understand, and a moral sense to hear and heed the call of duty. At these vital points of conduction we seem to be in communication with "the Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness, and for every form of excellence." It is as if a continuous dialogue were carried on between the finite spirit and the Infinite.

" Dwelt there no divineness in us,  
How could God's divineness win us? "

You sometimes hear a kind of music that sets the blood to dancing and puts the feet in motion. The vibrations of the violin-strings are repeated in the nerves. And you have sometimes heard or *felt* a Voice like that which called out, or called in, to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect"; and

which said to Israel, "Be holy, for I am holy." When we ponder these rare experiences, can we doubt that the Eternal Father delights to win us into communion with himself, that we may be perfected in his moral likeness?

Now we see the basis and reasonableness of that first and greatest commandment which bids us love supremely the Supremely Lovely. We cannot love fate nor chance nor blind force nor arbitrary authority. We might admire mere power, we might be filled with wonder at the thought of a Being who could be everywhere, know everything, and do everything at once. We might crouch in dread and servility before a universal monarch. But how can we love even a God with heart and soul and mind and strength, unless fully persuaded of his love to us? And how mighty must be the love of a God who is almighty! In this matter, he must take the initiative. This will make it possible to say, "We love him, because he first loved us." How many of us would ever have been persuaded of this love, if we had never heard "the good news of God" brought by his messenger Son?—a message which wakens the inward response.

On a Sunday afternoon, my California friend was reading the New Testament to his boy. They came to the saying of Jesus, "I and my Father are one." The little fellow exclaimed joyfully, "Just like us, isn't it, father?" What human child, growing up in a happy home with a sweet, natural sense of the duty and privilege of sonship, does not delight to give honor and love, confidence and obedience, to the parent who is wise and kind?

But the Fatherhood has been sadly clouded by theological inventions, and still more by the distorted and disordered aspects of personal and domestic life. As

faith in the goodness of God is made easier by the sight of human goodness, so, on the other hand, faith in his Fatherhood is made difficult by all parental unkindness and folly. Joseph May knew a man whose father had been so cruel that he could not hear the opening words of the Lord's Prayer without a shudder. An Ohio boy came home from Sunday-school with a sad piece of news for his little brother. "We've got another father—a father in heaven, teacher says; and I suppose *he'll* swear at us, and beat us, too!" Do not all disturbances and perversions of our earthly relationships tend to confuse our notions and feelings about spiritual realities? God seems lost to us when we are lost to ourselves.

When we say, "Our Father," whom do we address? The Maker and Manager of all worlds; the Power which upholds the seen and the unseen; the Wise Mind from which no mystery is hid; the Light that shines in the uncomprehending darkness; the Love which is the pulsating heart of the universe and whose Everlasting Arms are around each and all the creatures in the form of natural forces; the Father of our spirits, and the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

See how Jesus explains his own nature and helps to explain ours: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me. I can do nothing of myself. He loveth me; and he *sent me* because he so loved the world." In our lowly degree may we not say the same? Nay, if a little bird, or insect, or grass-blade could be so enlightened as to read its own origin and history, might it not say, "I came not of myself,—he sent me, and he came with me"?

The Divine Paternity covers everything—or nothing.

It gathers in its sheltering care all affairs and needs, all of time and all of eternity. When we seem to be most remote, it is as near to us as we are to ourselves. In dealing with our follies, errors, weaknesses, sufferings, and sins, we are dealing with the patient Love that can transform them all into processes of redemption and means of spiritual culture. The retributions that work along the lines of causation, or under the laws of moral consequence, are a part of the gracious family discipline.

“Behold the goodness and severity of God!” Nothing could be better for us than the uniformity of nature and the rigid enforcement of the laws which we can break, but cannot bend. There is no lowering of the standard, no excusing the careless or willing offender, no reversing of the rule that we shall reap what we sow; yet there is free, ungrudging pardon for every penitent,—a fatherly welcome for every returning prodigal.

The blessed assurance of sonship to God can become a real experience only as the spiritual life—the life of wisdom and love which is his image in us—lifts us above the animal plane. How should heavenly things be discerned by the earthly-minded? How should they be visible to eyes heavy with slumber or enjoyed by hearts gross with worldliness?

It is this grossness which makes us blind. The sunlight streams in through these windows. It cannot penetrate the walls of brick. And every colored or crinkled pane of glass is partially obstructive or distorting. Are there not all degrees of mental and moral transparency and opaqueness?

The purest thought is possible only to the purest mind. Every trace of selfishness hides the divine gen-

erosity. The falsities which darken the mind, the passions which becloud reason, the coarse and low or frivolous interests which occupy our attention, the selfishness which cuts off or interrupts our human connection with God and man,—these are the shadows that eclipse the divine light within us, and leave us wandering in darkness, as if there were no God.

We have seen that sonship is the pathway by which Jesus would lead us to his Father and ours. Can we not also see that this is the only true way of life, the way of our proper destiny?

A real and living faith in the Fatherhood of God would do more for mankind than to set a new sun in the sky: it would set a new sun in the firmament of the soul; the sun of righteousness would arise “with healing in his wings.” What gladness and cheer would flood our being if we half believed, half realized, our kinship to the Highest and Best! Conscious of that high connection, we should stand erect in new dignity and freedom; we should move through the exposures and trials of the world with such a sense of security as angels might feel if sent here on the King’s errands. And what mighty motives we should have for keeping our robes clear of soil and stain, our princely rank undishonored by unworthy conduct or bosom sins! How joyfully we should take to heart the apostle’s injunction,—“Walk worthy of God, as dear children!”

With this brave faith, why could we not look out of countenance all the seeming evils of the world? Those evils may come in the guise of prosperity; but then we should be like the queen who amid royal splendors found “God in all.” Or, if they came in the sombre



form of adversity, we, like the same queen driven into exile and poverty, should find "all in God."

"Not a sparrow shall fall on the ground without your Father." The poor helpless bird falls, indeed, pierced by the arrow, torn by the beast of prey, dashed on the rocks or into the sea by the storm; yet, even in its falling, the loving care goes with it. Does that same loving care, think you, really forget or forsake any victim of the earthquake, shipwreck, or massacre,—any sufferer from private malice, cruelty, oppression, or social injustice,—any son of God who hangs on a cross, whether innocent or guilty?

The faith of the Fatherhood supplies the loftiest standard of human character and conduct. It inspires the purest of all passions,—the love of perfection, the desire to be like him,—to be perfect as he is perfect. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as he is pure."

We come round again to the great phrase of Peter about becoming "partakers of the divine nature" by escaping the corruptions of the world. For we have found in the soul a germ of the God-quality, or certainly a capacity for acquiring that quality through obedience to the truth; and this germ or capacity is to be quickened into activity by the touch of love. Is not this, indeed, "the grace that brings salvation"?

The Christian Church, in all its great Confessions, has made the Fatherhood of God its first article of faith. Has it been held only as a dead dogma or as a vital and vitalizing truth? And to us, who blazon it on these walls and repeat it in hymn and prayer, how much does

it really mean? What is it doing for our life? Does it inspire us with filial reverence and affection?—with higher self-respect and respect for all our fellow-beings, of every creed, color, and condition? Does it give us strength to do and endure, and comfort us under daily trials? Does it give us peace in believing and joy in the spirit of holiness? Does it draw us into happy fellowship with all lovers of the good and true,—the Children of the Light of every name,—and fill us with compassion for those who walk in darkness? Does it shame us away from evil and encourage our aspiration to be “righteous as he is righteous”? Does it fill us with great expectations of better things in reserve for us as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? It doth not, indeed, appear what we shall be; but sonship can mean no less than growing likeness and full inheritance.

What, now, is the richest possession of mankind in this twentieth Christian century? Not our material gains, not our liberties and laws, not our arts and sciences, not the rich flowering of literature. It is not even our belief in God. It is our belief in God as the Father; in his boundless, impartial, unpurchased love for us all; in our kinship with him, and therefore in the greatness and incalculable worth of the soul. It is our belief that, while we have bodies, we are not bodies; because as God is a spirit, so we are spirits; that our life is hidden and safe in his life; that the love in our hearts is his love; that he is the living Head of the family of souls, and that not one of us can ever fall out of his hand.

But every man's thought of God is determined by the quality of the man's own life. He cannot put into his

deity any attribute with which his experience has not made him acquainted. A man with a conscience will easily recognize a supreme Lawgiver and Sovereign ; or, even if he doubts the divine personality, he may still be sound in his moral purpose and nobly loyal to duty. But there is something far beyond this for our enrichment and delight. Jesus, the Son of Man who knew himself also Son of God, has made that sacred secret the common property of mankind,—a fountain of life for whosoever will come and drink.

But no disobedient child fully loves or trusts or enjoys the father or mother. Only those led by the Spirit of God can know themselves sons of God. What, then, of those who are not so led ?

When the prodigal turns his back and wanders away to a wild and wicked life, he will banish the thought of his father ; he will prefer not to think of his home ; and, worse still, he will be lost to the innocence of childhood and to his own better nature. Could he ever be called a man again until after bitter suffering “he came to himself” ? It must have been like an awakening after a hideous dream. But all the time he has lived in the sorrowing heart of the father, who welcomes and celebrates his return. “This my son was dead, and is alive again,”—a son all the time !

The Lamb in the midst of the Throne, the changeless Love which is at the centre of the government of the universe, the Christ-spirit which we all accept as the truest and highest manifestation of God yet known to us, the meeting-place and harmony of Fatherhood and Sonship,—this is our present and everlasting rest. Here man is no longer an orphan and outcast, no longer a homeless wanderer, forlorn and uncared for, feeding

on husks and a companion of brutes ; but a child at home in the Father's house, wearing the royal robes, provided for at the royal table, and honored by a place in the royal service ; living and rejoicing evermore in the light of a countenance that is never darkened with a frown, and which is never hidden from any of us save by the blindness of ignorance and fear, or by disobedience and distrust.

And now, with ever-deeper meaning and richer faith, with new serenity and sincerity, let us join with Jesus in praiseful prayer to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

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“Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why deal we treacherously every man against his brother?”—MALACHI ii. 10.

“He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, . . . for in him we live and move and have our being.”—ACTS xvii. 26, 28 (Rev. Ver.).

THE Fatherhood of God is the basis of the first and greatest commandment,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” The Brotherhood of Man is the basis of that second commandment which is like; namely, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Jesus takes these great words of the ancient law and sets them up in the highest place of faith and worship. As his own summary of the law and the prophets, he adds the Golden Rule: “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Alas for us and for mankind, if these oracles of life have lost their impressiveness through familiarity!

The sublime truth that “God is love” supplies a ground for both commandments, and brings them out in glorious relief. Swift and sweeping comes the inference that those who are made in his spiritual image ought also to love one another. How can we hate, how regard even with indifference, any who are objects of interest to the universal Father?

Our chief interest in this world arises from its being the home of mankind. Our chief interest in life arises

from our human relations. These relations alone make possible the family, society, civilization, and our complete life as individuals.

Within this feeling of regard for our fellow-men is another feeling that throbs like a heart: *we are all of one kind*; we are kindred; we have a common nature; "all minds are of one family." This basis of unity in our mental and moral or spiritual nature would not be at all disturbed if it were proved, as it is not absolutely proved, that the human world has been peopled from several different stocks and centres.

Whatever faith we have in human nature is rooted in this instinctive or very general belief that we are endowed with common qualities. It has made us exacting in our demands upon each other. We expect great and good things of a man because he *is* a man, and we are easily angry or contemptuous with those who fall below the standard. An unreasonable and often cruel rule of judging; but it proves at least that we have a high ideal.

Yet this ideal has been in the air rather than in the actualities of life. By a curious and tragical paradox, the prevailing estimate of human nature has not been based on our thought of man as we know he might be, but on our observation of man as he is, and on our tendency to judge others by our own meannesses. Think what a woful part has been played in history by jealousies, suspicions, and distrusts, or by personal and international antagonisms and murderous hatreds!

It is another curious fact that the so-called superior race feels obliged to justify its contempt for a less developed people and its domination over them by pretending to regard them as sub-human. Red men, yellow

men, brown men,— we ask superciliously, “*Are* they really men?” To admit the negro’s manhood would be to confess his claim to equal rights. Yet he is “a man and brother” for all the purposes of criminal law; and his capacity for rising is admitted by every effort to keep him down.

But faith in the essential nobility of mankind is at the foundation of free society, and is the spur to all progress. Where this faith is weak, men have little satisfaction in each other, little capacity for consulting and co-operating, little force for any great enterprise. Where such faith is strong, there is active public spirit, energy for creating and utilizing resources, a disposition to establish and maintain all kinds of useful institutions. And it is strongest of all where there is the most ardent conviction of our relation to a higher being, — our common Father.

The brotherhood is provided for in deep-seated instincts. Watch the children when they meet as strangers. Their shy and eager eyes tell of hungry hearts. In an hour they will be as fond of each other as of nuts and apples.

Their seniors never outgrow this craving for their kind. Every social clique or coterie, every sect or party, — nay, every group on the sidewalk and every chatty interview or hurried greeting between two or more who meet and pass, — tells the story of human brotherhood.

See what endless organizations spring from this common impulse. In Boston alone, besides the churches, there are more than a thousand lodges, fraternities, societies, circles, and clubs.

Civic life testifies. The city, state, or nation must

be thought of as a mass of individuals drawn together because they belong together and cannot keep apart.

The church is the supreme instance. It builds fraternity, not only on the need which all men have of each other, but on their slowly awakened sense of relationship to the common Father; and it most strongly draws those who respond to the call to "be followers of God as dear children."

There are ways of thinking about man, as about God, which make love difficult or impossible. But we do not learn these ways in the school of Christ. Says Harnack, "We have become dearer to one another from learning of the Father." He quotes from another, "The value of a truly great man consists in his increasing the value of all mankind." Emerson held that "Jesus alone saw the greatness of man."

He brought not so much a new religion as a new moral code, a humanization of the older faith and practice. He swept away the clouds that conceal us from each other, and that darken the sky above us. In the light that shines from his own face we see that what seemed our poor distorted humanity is stamped with the image of divinity.

Now open the Old Testament. Across some of its pages there is a bar of cloud. The pride and exclusiveness of Israel put reproach and contempt on other nations. You read in one sentence that they should not oppress the foreigner; in another, that they might make him into a slave; in one sentence, that they should not eat the flesh of any animal that died of itself; in another, that they might sell it to the stranger. One psalm is a breath of tender prayer for all nations: an-



other breaks out in maledictions and "perfect hatred" of the enemies of Jehovah. The Gentile had no such strong claim as the Jew to justice or mercy. To love the neighbor and hate the enemy had become a part of the ethical code. Then came the higher teaching,—  
 "Love your enemies: bless them that curse you."

From one point of view it is easy to justify a certain disparagement of the masses of mankind. Voltaire thought the common herd not worth taking into account. "Mostly fools" was Carlyle's description of his countrymen. Mephisto tells the Lord that "man uses his reason only to make himself the most brutal of brutes; that he is like a grasshopper that will not lie in the grass, but thrusts his nose into every puddle." And the writer of the fourteenth Psalm represents Jehovah himself as searching the earth in vain for one righteous or rational man.

• Certainly, the rulers and managers of men have not believed it possible to raise them far enough above the monkeys to trust them with the powers of self-direction or self-government. Those of superior culture and position have been as reluctant to own the universal brotherhood as the more enlightened nations have been to treat on equal terms with those of lower development. To see "a man and brother" in the savage, or semi-barbarian, or in the clodhoppers of civilized lands, one must look with other eyes.

Yet all the despotisms and cruelties and stratifications of caste have not wholly stifled the deep instinct of our common humanity. Whose name is most honored and loved through the ages? Not the name of the conqueror who

"Wades through slaughter to a throne,  
 And shuts the gates of mercy on mankind,"

but of the man who, with or without reason, is regarded as a disinterested benefactor; the patriot who lives or dies for his country; the king who is beloved as the father of his people; the philanthropist who searches out the unfortunate and lifts up the fallen and the weak; or the man who is bravely just, and who accepts obloquy and loss because he will not be a party to a popular wrong.

All these Christian ages has not the world adored that great Son of Man and of God for the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth as he spoke to the common people and to those whom even these despised? And does not the highest Being show his divineness by stooping to the lowest? What becomes of faith in God, when we have no faith in his creatures?

Probably all the diseases of civilization and the principal evils which afflict our communities can be traced to the prevailing selfishness, to the lack of brotherly feeling,—a thinly disguised form of dishonesty, which makes us willing to shirk our share of the common burdens, willing to profit by others' losses, willing to take what is not our own, and to live by fraud or cunning.

There are many among us who are innocently and honestly unproductive; many who would gladly be self-sustaining if they were not disqualified by various causes. Society is fortunate, as any of us are fortunate, in being able to help the helpless, just as it is a sacred privilege for parents to care for their children. We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Mischief begins and spreads when material interests

are set above humanity, and wealth above welfare; when the workman is sacrificed to the work, the producer to the product. So we go on piling up the millions, while morals are forgotten, hearts are crushed, and our brothers and sisters are cheated of those benefits of existence which heavenly bounty has provided for all. Does not Cain still stand with his hands red with blood, defiantly asking God, "Am I my brother's keeper"?

Every land is burdened and endangered by the increase of a base population; yet every land cherishes the customs, policies, and vices which tend to multiply such a population. Every land permits, if it does not encourage, the heartless greed which plunders or taxes the many for the enrichment of the few; and often this wrong is done by an abuse of the powers of government. Thus every land suffers from those social antagonisms which make men forget that they are brothers.

How deeply and cruelly the sense of brotherhood is wounded by the war spirit, or the military passion! This was never more apparent than now. Who wonders at Kossuth's complaint that "there is not yet a Christian nation"! But evolutionary science teaches us to regard all this brutality as a survival. There was a time when every private man carried a weapon for offence or for defence. A happier social order set in when civilized people learned to look to the law for protection and for the settlement of personal grievances. But the *nations* still go armed; and every government in Christendom acts on the old rule that there is no safety except in maintaining a sufficient array of force to make others afraid. Voltaire had some reason for saying that "war is the natural con-

dition of mankind"; for this will be true so long as we are living so little above the plane of the beasts of prey. But

"The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns"; and millions are asking in all seriousness, with Franklin, "if the nations cannot find some more reasonable way of settling their differences than by cutting each other's throats." Even the rulers who keep up and increase the armaments are asking that question.

But every standing army cultivates the war spirit by necessity. Not one of us who are here would find pleasure in killing a man, even if we felt it to be necessary and justifiable, as in personal or public defence. But the average professional soldier welcomes war, and rejoices in it; and every boy who hopes to wear a uniform hopes also that he shall see a battle.

An officer home from the Philippines told me that he liked it, and should like it still better "if there were more fighting." I heard a naval chaplain describe the exultation with which our marines entered into the attack on the Spanish fleet off Santiago; and he justified this feeling, for he said, "When a preacher has written a sermon, he wants to preach it; and, when a brave man is in the service, he wants a chance to do something." And just what is that something which he wants to do? Quite above his bloody business was the captain who silenced the cheers because "the poor devils were dying." But when the trouble with Spain was brewing, we heard of a company of naval officers who clinked their glasses to this sentiment: "Here's to a long war, and a bloody one!"

Ah, my brothers, what sights that sad face on the

cross looks down upon, nineteen centuries after the angel song of peace and good will!

Two ministers were together. One of them said, "If our boy grows up a soldier, my wife and I shall be perfectly satisfied." The other said, "Better that a child of mine should die in the innocence of infancy than that he should grow up to be a shedder of blood!"

To those who accept the principle of Human Brotherhood, every case of international hatred and strife must appear like a family quarrel, a family misfortune, and a family disgrace. Then let us have no part in the propagation of ill-will or ungenerous judgments, or injurious and irritating trade regulations, as between different nations and races. We all rejoice that it is no longer an American fashion to hate the British because their forefathers and ours were enemies. But we were never further than now from being either generous or just toward those whom we count our inferiors in development and culture, especially if we happen to want anything which is theirs.

We need to rediscover and confirm a rational doctrine of equality. Certainly, there are superior breeds of men, as there are superior persons in every community, and as there may be superior children in a given family. The old tradition gave to the superior man mastery over the rest of his community, and established a hereditary order which retained mastery, not by merit, but by position and power. In the same way the eldest son gained and held the advantage over his brothers, and often used it selfishly and cruelly. We have left these things behind, with other rubbish. But we are taking up again the false principle which was at the root of the old despotisms. We are making

the natural inequalities of races and nations an excuse for claiming dominion over them and robbing them of equal rights to life, liberty, and the means of happiness, for which they, like our fathers, are willing to die.

There is no cure for this growing disease but in the Christian doctrine of brotherhood. They who will be truly superior or great must be the helpers and servants of the weaker. The strong do not exist for themselves alone. They are not created to set themselves above their brethren, nor to rule them as subjects and vassals. There is a nobler ambition: "He that will be chief, let him render the larger service to all."

How slowly men discover each other! What trifles keep them apart! And, when cruelty or injustice becomes a custom, how difficult it is to eradicate it! and how easily good men hide its hideousness with excuses, reasons, and divine sanctions! How it tortured poor Cowper!

" My ear is pained,  
My soul is sick with every day's report  
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.  
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart;  
It does not feel for man. The natural bond  
Of brotherhood is severed, as the flax  
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.

. . . . .  
Lands intersected by a narrow frith  
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed  
Make enemies of nations who had else,  
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one.  
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys."

We cannot quote these lines from a poem written more than a hundred years ago without rejoicing that im-

mense advances have been made toward better neighborhood between the nations.

But Human Brotherhood is still very far from realized. Millions who would be made better and happier by knowing, loving, and serving each other are kept apart by high and thick walls,—walls of prejudice, party, sect, creed, caste, social exclusiveness, business rivalry, and selfish interest.

Aversions and antagonisms are propagated like the bacteria which produce foul disease. In one city the boys in neighboring streets found some cause for quarrel, and made it a point of honor to shower missiles and blows on any lad who was caught outside the limit. In a village of North England, as the workingmen were going home at evening, they spied a stranger in homely garb; and one of them was heard to say, "'Eave a brick at him!" When an Ojibway Indian was asked the cause of the bitter feud between his tribe and the Dakotas, he answered: "I do not know; but, whenever an Ojibway sees a Dakota, he wants to kill him, and they feel the same way toward us. It was so with our fathers and with their fathers."

We may all be brothers, but it goes hard to own the relationship; and the scientists do not make it easier by telling us that the lowest races are still nearer to the ape than to the highly civilized man. But science can bear a different testimony; for the idiot can be educated, the criminal can be reformed, the barbarian can be reached and set in the path of progress, and the foremost people are the descendants of naked savages and cave-dwellers.

But progress is slow, especially in the early stages; and so serious are the obstacles that those who are best

endowed do not find it easy to advance. As these obstacles are immensely greater in the case of the backward peoples, it is all the more cruel to impose on them needless disabilities and difficulties.

The altruistic sense, or feeling for others, is likely to be most active in natures that are in other ways the noblest. The man of fine grain and high honor is ready in courtesy toward men of all sorts and conditions, and is incapable of contempt toward those of less culture or social consequence. And this would soon be a different world, if the professed followers of Jesus could but share the vision of him who saw in every nobody a somebody.

Roger Wolcott, when Governor of Massachusetts, could never sink the gentleman in the official; and the woman who scrubbed the State House floor was not too lowly to receive a bow and kindly word as he passed to his office. George Washington, lifting his hat in response to the salute of a negro, loses his dignity no more than when presiding in a council of war or at the head of his cabinet.

William Morris tells how he was saved from feeling hard and angry toward the brutal and ruffianly crowd that went yelling past the window of his beautiful workshop. He asked himself, Why was he on this side of the window, among lovely works of art and delightful books, and not on the other side, in the empty, ugly street, the drink-reeking gin-shops, or the foul, degraded lodgings? His own feelings, tastes, and desires told him what they had missed, and stirred in him a compassionate desire to promote uplifting movements, or cheerful and wholesome employments, which might check the downward drift of many English workingmen.



Thank Heaven, the air of our time is musical with voices that call to the lowest to come up higher!

The Brotherhood of Man gives the true basis and impulse of co-operation. One spirit alone can make one body. Only the combining peoples are strong. Competition qualified by brotherliness would make the industrial and commercial wheels go round with far less friction and with immeasurable good nature. This kind of wisdom has long been coined into proverbs. "In union is strength." "Many hands make light work." This is Mill's test of civilization: Can the people consult toward agreement? Can they pull together and take along the common load? That is, the more brotherliness, the higher the type of society. Spinoza has the same idea: "Nothing is more useful to man than man." He adds, "Reasonable men desire no good for themselves which they do not also desire for other men; and so they are righteous, faithful, honorable." His ideal, like Saint Paul's, is that "all minds and bodies should make up as it were one mind and body."

All this looks toward social harmony and unity of interests. It hallows every helpful activity, and brands all hurtful occupations with infamy. However profitable a business may be, if it injures humanity, an honest man would keep out of it as he would keep out of hell. The liquor saloon is a case in point. In the words of a New York judge, "No man has a right to live at the expense of the life, health, and happiness of his fellow-beings." But every industry, trade, or profession that contributes to welfare, if chosen and pursued on the higher human principle, becomes a "voca-

tion," a sacred calling. An honest day's work may be as good as a prayer, even if it only feeds the worker and saves him from becoming a burden.

The love of our human kind, like our sympathy with lower creatures and our affinities with inanimate nature, puts sweetness into every cup. It invigorates every faculty and makes life better worth living, by claiming all resources and energies for honorable and happy uses. It cures us of weak self-pity and silly self-conceit. It enlarges life to make room for every variety of human interest. It is the only antidote for a thousand virulent poisons,—personal, domestic, social, and international. And it opens the door of the heart to the love of God, which flows in more abundantly as we give it free outpour in self-forgetting service.

The Fatherhood and the Brotherhood belong together, and neither can mean much without the other. The more fully we receive the Sonship, the more we shall see in Divinity and in Humanity.

Certainly, we can *say* "Fatherhood" with very little filial feeling,—very little confidence, gratitude, or gladness. Certainly, we can *say* "Brotherhood" with very little regard for mankind, or for the men, women, and children whom we meet every day. To forget and neglect—to be blind and insensible—is as easy as lying, to which it is closely related.

But if our faith in these great realities is real and *vital*, and if our perception of the truths which they represent is unclouded by selfishness, sordidness, and sensuality, we shall cease to think of heaven and earth as far apart. Our little planet will seem more worthy of its place in the Kosmos. It will move and shine among the stars of God.

## THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS.

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"Behold, I gave him for a witness to the peoples, for a leader and commander to the peoples."—ISAIAH lv. 4. (Rev. ver.)

THIS saying originally applied to David. Like each other king of Israel, he was called Messiah, or the Lord's Anointed, which in Greek is Christus,—the "Christ." Let us take it as the starting-point of an inquiry into the historic conditions that led up to the career of Jesus of Nazareth, and the way in which he came to be known by this lofty title.

From 700 to 500 B.C. the nation was breaking to pieces, under the press of domestic disorder, foreign invasion, and religious apostasy. At last the capital was burned, and most of the people who had not been killed were carried into far-away captivity.

But, in their affliction and chastisement, they remembered the ancient covenant, and grew confident that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, would bring them again to their own land; that Jerusalem would rise from its ashes; that a temple more splendid than Solomon's would stand on Mt. Moriah; that the monarchy would be re-established in righteousness and peace under a king of David's line; and it would be as if David himself had returned to reign forever and to subdue all the nations to his authority.

These glorious visions never came true. Some thousands of Jews did indeed return from Babylon to rebuild

the city and to set up the altar of a purified worship, and in time their descendants were counted by millions; but in twenty-five centuries the Jews have not recovered national independence, and no son of David has ascended the throne of his fathers. But as through the seventy years of exile they were sustained by the prophetic assurance that Jehovah, who led their ancestors out of Egypt, would lead them out of Babylon, so, in the long cruel centuries of oppression that followed, the hearts of pious patriots glowed more and more with a flaming vision of Israel's divine mission and future greatness.

The burning Messianic hope, the hope of a divinely sent human leader,—cherished through many generations and intensified by suffering and persecution,—created a national ideal which fashioned itself around an imaginary popular hero. This passionate expectation made it easy for fanaticism and imposture to set up the standard of revolt against foreign dominion. Time after time the beacon fires were lighted on the hills, the trumpets were blown, and impatient patriots raised the cry, "The Messiah has come to save us!" But only to discover that they had followed a false light into deeper darkness, and brought down more heavily than ever the iron hand of the hated foreigner.

Now we can understand the construction which the popular mind put upon the proclamation of John the Baptist and Jesus: "Repent, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand." It was the watchword of a national uprising,—at once a moral and a political manifesto. It was a call to become righteous in the sight of God, so as to be sure of his favor when the signal should be given. John, probably suspected as an incendiary, was soon thrown into prison. Jesus, whose preaching, like

John's, looked only to a spiritual reformation, soon found himself subject to the same misconstruction; for the excited country people "were about to come and take him by force to make him a king," so that for a time he was obliged to withdraw from public observation.

As the multitude from Galilee escorted Jesus into Jerusalem, they burst into a tempest of *vivas*,—"The king cometh! Hosanna to the son of David!" But a sad and sullen silence fell when he gave no signal for drawing the sword. Then the priestly party took advantage of his popularity to accuse him of heading a movement against Cæsar; and Pilate tried to justify a cowardly judicial murder by putting on the cross the contemptuous accusation, "Jésus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews!"

We know that the minds of the apostles were obscured by the same political illusion; for James and John, set on by their ambitious mother, asked Jesus to give them the highest offices when he should come into his kingdom. And, even after his crucifixion and reappearance, he was asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Quite as noteworthy is the legend of Herod's slaughter of the children, because of a rumor that the expected king had been born in Bethlehem; also, the supposed necessity of tracing the ancestral line of Joseph back to David, although the genealogical table given in Luke is quite different from that in Matthew. The expectations of a temporal sovereign melted into thin air, like morning mists. A Mohammedan mosque stands on the rock foundation of the Jewish temple; and the children of Abraham have found a home in

every land more than in Palestine. No expositor claims that the word of the prophets has been literally fulfilled.

But something incomparably greater and more glorious has actually come to pass in the face of all the world. The old ideal of the Messiah appears poor, cheap, and almost vulgar, when contrasted with the real leadership of Jesus, accepted as a spiritual prince and deliverer. The great words of Isaiah, when he applies them to himself in the synagogue of Nazareth, are transfigured with heavenly meaning: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me [*echrise me*, — "made me a Christ"] to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to send the oppressed away free; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

This was no mere political harangue; and we can understand the lofty and true sense of Peter's bold words on the day of Pentecost: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." And later: "Unto you first, God having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

In the Bible, the word "king" occurs about two thousand eight hundred and seventy-five times,—a proof of the powerful impression made upon the thought and imagination of mankind by the institution of monarchy, and the tremendous part it has played in national life and in human history. The king was the centre and symbol of government. His authority and majesty gave reality and vitality to the collective life or unity of

a people. The kingdom itself was organized about his sacred person. He was believed to reign by divine right, as the representative of the Deity. In many countries he was hardly thought of as "a mere man." He was honored as a god, and wore the title "Son of God." If he had conquered other kings, he was "King of kings" or "Lord of lords."

Oriental sovereigns made a selfish and brutal use of their arbitrary power, as the Jews learned only too well from long and cruel sufferings. In the New Testament "the kings of this world" are often referred to in such a tone as modern labor unions fall into when they speak of capitalists and unscrupulous corporations. The groaning multitudes were longing for a Deliverer; but they thought only of outward bondage, and not of salvation from their inward slaveries. The time had come for setting up a new kind of government, whose foundations should be laid in human hearts, and whose higher law should be graven in the human mind.

Now, if we look through the reported discourses of Jesus, we shall find that no phrase is so often on his lips, no subject so often illustrated by his parables, as this one of "the kingdom." "The kingdom of heaven" is the common form in Matthew; "the kingdom of God," in Mark and Luke.

"The gospel of the kingdom" is the subject of the new proclamation. But it is something very different from the kingdom they are looking and longing for; something at once more simple and more sublime. It is not to come with observation: it is to grow from small beginnings like a mustard-seed; it is to spread in humanity like leaven in the meal. Its subjects are the new-born and childlike, the humble and meek, the merciful,

the pure in heart, the much-enduring, who are yet the men of stout-hearted faith, who can outface all opposition and die for a principle. Such is not a kingdom of this world, with its endless wrangles for power and advantage ; it is not the old priestly formalism and ceremonial, nor the meat and drink of religious festivals : it is a new order of righteousness and peace, of willing service and sacrifice.

Did Jesus think of himself in boyhood, or at the outset of his public ministry, as the Messiah, or the Christ ? Some of the early Christians believed that the divine Anointing first came at his baptism, when he saw or felt the Spirit descending upon him like a dove, and heard a voice salute him as Son of God. We cannot fix a date for this great experience : it is enough that he came to the full persuasion that the predictions of "One that should come" were fulfilled in himself,—that it was the Father's good pleasure to set him at the head of a movement which, though it was to begin with "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," was destined to be enlarged by its own vital spirit and inner principle to the breadth of the world and the length of the ages.

Thus the words "king" and "kingdom" were charged with a new meaning, — a meaning unknown to the children of this world, who hold in love or awe the palace, the throne, and the crown. No wonder they who felt the blessed spell and uplift of the spirit of Jesus, and obeyed the upward call, were ready to salute him as the Captain of Salvation, the Prince of Life.

But never was a more unofficial person than Jesus ! It is not least of his services that he leads us away from personal and churchly domination. Those who love to salute him as Christ, King, or Lord, will do him the



grossest injustice unless they exclude from these titles of honor every trace of suggestion borrowed from human governments. How can he "see the desire of his soul" so long as the reign of Incarnate Love is displaced by an arbitrary despotism, set up in the name of one who took on him the form of a servant, and who was never more a servant than now?

He was no usurper of his more than royal position and power. He did not force his place at the head of the movement for human redemption; he found himself there, simply by obeying the inward call and by letting his light shine. He could not help realizing his superiority to the dull human throngs. Moved with compassion, he acted the part of any wise teacher who offers his services to the ignorant, of any physician who flies to the relief of suffering, of any strong man who reaches help to the weak. Here is the true king of men,—their noble brother, who delights to serve the lowest and the least. Can any who do not share this spirit be truly his followers?

How shall we explain his origin? Ask as well how we shall explain the origin of any greatness—or of any littleness. Who explains a grass-blade? Who can tell why one tree towers above all the forest, or why one child of the family carries off all the gifts of genius? Dr. Gordon thinks that Jesus may have had the root of his being "deeper in God." It is a beautiful mystery that his humanity should have held so large a measure of divinity,—such a fulness of that blended love and wisdom as rounded out his sonship, and fitted him to be at once our wonder, our example, and our inspiration.

Was he miraculously born? Did he heal the sick and raise the dead? Did he still the tempest, and walk on

the waves, and create food for thousands? Did he only swoon and seem to die on the cross, and then revive in the cool air of Joseph's tomb? Or did he come back from real death, reanimate what had been a corpse, and show himself to his friends with the same flesh and bones and open wounds? Or did he appear in "a spiritual body," which only anointed eyes could see, and which could glide through closed doors, and appear or disappear mysteriously?

Questions like these press on the thoughtful student. They must be answered or left unanswered, according to the impression made on candid minds by the evidence. The time has gone by when a question of fact could be settled by a feeling; and thoughtful men and women do not care to be told that their eternal welfare will be imperilled by seeking honest answers to fair questions.

Yet there is no reason to doubt that the first three Gospels contain what was best remembered by eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of Jesus, though their reports were written and compiled by others, and were embedded in a deposit of traditions which grew rapidly in a credulous age. For, the deeper and more divine was the spiritual influence of the Master, the more certain it was that the loving faith of uncritical converts would welcome, multiply, and magnify the wonder-stories which went round from mouth to mouth and added to the fame and glory of their great Benefactor. All this helps to measure the powerful impression produced by the words and works, the life and death, the character and personality, of one who is now honored by many fair-minded Jews as the greatest of the Hebrew prophets.

The wonder-stories also have a remarkable consist-

ency. They go well together, and have a beautiful fitness to the character of the man. His miracles especially are nearly all works of mercy, such as would never be told of Nero or Catiline. Stories of this kind, whether fact or fancy, do not grow around the name of any ordinary man: they shadow forth, even when they are grotesque or improbable, the outlines of a great personality and the wonderful power of a master.

Jesus wrote nothing. He took no pains to have anything written by his friends; and, probably, nothing was written for several years after his death. Yet he was sure of the deathlessness of the truth he came to proclaim. "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away." So he has become a mighty spiritual force, working on through the ages. His great message of the Fatherhood and Brotherhood — the transfigured soul of Judaism — sounds and resounds over the lands and through all changes and confusions. In the imperfect letter we still hear the voice of the living spirit.

Here is a leadership that represents more than kingly authority,— the leadership of one "whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power," and "exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour," that he might rule the world only by truth and grace. His words are still articulate, even in their echoes, and come home to our hearts; for he speaks as one who has the authority of insight and conviction, backed by the urgency of his love for God and man, blended with faith in both. What is so purely human, natural, and rational, why not call it divine?

We are thus brought to recognize the real leadership of Jesus as it represents the progress of mankind from the

lower levels of existence to that higher state where we know and share the quality of children of the Pure Spirit and become brothers in a common heritage. For, if we ask in deep seriousness, What is the greatest human need? the answer would not be, A reform in government, a larger measure of liberty, an advance in science and economics. We should cry out for light and leading toward a wiser and better life.

Then, if we heard a clear voice saying, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these things will follow in their order," our reason and conscience would say, This is the highest truth; this is a word worthy to come from God. Leadership in the upward path,—this is what we need, and all we need.

I think, when we heard such a message, we should look twice at the messenger, and wish to know more about him and what he would have to say of himself. Now one of the most striking facts about Jesus is his entire confidence in his own mission as a spiritual leader; his sense of open communication with the Divine Mind, —a source of inspiration of which he claimed no monopoly, but which he sought to make the common property of mankind.

Of what Jesus said or did we cannot be positively certain. The precious fragments of biography and discourse preserved for us in the Gospels are too meagre, and are mixed with more or less doubtful matter. Yet they put us in direct touch with his mind and heart; they make it easy to discern his spirit and quality. We know something of an artist by the work of his hand; something even of an animal by the print of his foot. We know something of the great men of the past by the effects they have produced on the world. Plato and

Aristotle have illuminated the path of philosophy and science for the scholarship of more than two thousand years. In making Rome an empire, Cæsar helped to shape the history and law of modern Europe. Such men leave their mark, even if the events of their life are imperfectly known.

The New Testament writings, however uncertain their date or authorship, show very clearly the kind of impression Jesus made on the men of his time. They all picture to us a man of wonderful purity, power, courage, and kindness, unworldly and careless of human praise or blame; a man who was full of compassion and helpfulness, who "went about doing good," and taught the people lessons of divinest rectitude and pity, as if all heaven were moved with desire for the salvation of mankind from error and evil.

He produced also the impression of extraordinary wisdom, as if the light of God were shining in his mind. When Dr. Channing lectured in Philadelphia, a lady said, "Oh, I wish he would go on and tell us what he thinks about everything!" So did the people hang on the lips of the new prophet. He seemed to know what was in man, and what was in God; and he seemed to come to this knowledge by some secret method, unknown to the doctors of the law. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Yet it was written in their sacred scroll, "They shall all be taught of God,"—an experience of inward enlightenment which was very real to him, and which he encouraged his disciples to seek and trust.

Jesus leads to the Father. No one could lead that way unless he walked in it. No one could show us the

Father unless he knew him. No one could know him save by living with him. So, in drawing us to himself, he takes us beyond himself. To share the life of sonship is to be at home in the upper mansions, with a place in the divine family and a share in all the supplies.

Is it too much to claim that the world is indebted to the Carpenter of Nazareth for its most rational and exalted thought of both man and God, and especially for its most helpful and satisfying feeling about the friendliness of the world and its mysterious Author? I suppose that when a man of ordinary intelligence tries to think at all about God, it is the God of Jesus that comes into his mind,—the God of the great Hebrew prophets brought still nearer to humanity and cleared of the semi-barbarous traits of the earlier Jehovah. Any other deity, it is well said, is becoming impossible to thought, as it always was unsatisfying to faith and love. For we are not led to the Father merely as an intellectual conception, but as an indwelling Presence, a ground of reposeful trust, and a living, loving Will enthroned in our own.

Thus also we are led toward the purest and sweetest morality, whose root strikes into the law of love. Only the good tree *can* bear good fruit; only out of a good heart *can* a man bring forth good things. Only the pure *can* discern the All-pure. What teacher ever gave so high a standard, or such mighty motive to personal virtue? Can human aspiration ever go beyond the call to "be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect?" This way, then, Jesus leads,—toward the perfection of God! In showing us the Fatherhood, dwelling in all souls, he shows us the equal brotherhood of mankind. Until we find man, we have not found God; until we are

forgiving, we cannot be forgiven. Until we love and honor and serve the brother, we shall not acceptably love or honor or serve the Father.

Moreover, our way of treating our fellow-beings must correspond with the Father's way. As he is kind to the unthankful and evil, so must we be. As he stands ever ready to receive and forgive the penitent, so must we. As he does not hold himself above the lowest of his creatures, so must not we.

To follow such leading would change our attitude and animus toward the human world, with all its sorts and conditions. His spirit leads every movement for social betterment, for enlightenment and refinement, for the relief and prevention of poverty and misery, for undoing of the heavy burdens, for rescuing the lost and fallen, for cleansing all the filthy leprosies of our deeply disordered civilization.

When the Chinese throw their girl-babies into the river, as the old Spartans cast out their feeble infants to die, we ask, Could they do such hideous things if they had ever heard of him who took the peasant children in his arms and blessed them? When the African tribes used to kidnap their neighbors and sell them to the white slave-traders from Europe and America, do you think either party could have been taught in the school of him who declared that any wrong done to "the least of these" offended him as if done to himself? When we who boast of Christian civilization send a great force of men and guns across the seas to shoot down thousands of men of another color, in order to compel them to acknowledge our supremacy and their own inferiority, would it be believed that we held in our blood-stained hands the Heaven-sent instruction which says, "Ye know

that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you?" The voice of Jesus utters more solemnly and sternly than any other a rebuke of all the unscrupulous uses of power, as well as the unjust acquisition of wealth and the degradation of humanity by its abuses.

The leadership of Jesus also takes us to a new point of view for nature and human experience. There has come a time when the sprouting of a seed, the beating of a heart, the sight of a sunset, the whispers of conscience, the perception of the simplest truth that may guide our feet in the ways of wisdom or instruct us in righteousness, comes home to reason and to faith as a surer proof of the Real Presence than all the sacraments or the records of marvels and miracles.

How came about this great increase of spiritual insight? Partly, I think chiefly, because such multitudes of men and women have become unconsciously habituated to look out upon nature and in upon themselves through the eyes of one who saw in the worlds of matter and of mind the scenes of divine activity. We see all flowers differently because he bids us consider the lilies; all birds, because he spoke of the sparrows; all thought and feeling, because he taught that the spirit of God acts in the spirit of man; all questions of right and wrong, because he found the kingdom, the lawgiver, the law, and the very throne of God in the human soul.

What are the qualities we want in a leader? Clear vision to see the way, and courage to walk in it; large humanity and entire unselfishness; superiority to our weakness, yet exhaustless sympathy and helpfulness; a



commanding personality and sure confidence in the Unseen and Eternal. And he must not hypnotize us, or draw us into servile relations to himself. He must give us full leave and encouragement to act in freedom. He must come that we may have light, and see with our own eyes; that we may have life, and have it more abundantly.

We have seen that Jesus made no provision for any record of his words or his works. This proves, at least, that he did not mean to shut his followers up to the letter of his own teaching. There is no reliable evidence that he privately taught the apostles a system of doctrines which they in turn were to communicate to initiates. His biographers certainly deny that he said anything in secret which was not to be proclaimed upon the housetops. He seems to have trusted everything to the free spirit, to the contagion of truth and love; to the word which, once spoken, could never again fall into silence; to the creative energy of which he knew himself the receiver and transmitter; to the continuation of his own life in the lives of others; and perhaps to the spiritual power he should henceforth exert from the invisible realm. Thus the leadership of Jesus is both personal and more than personal. He bids us learn where he learned; he leads us to the ever-flowing fountains.

The early Christians did not depend on their own precious writings. They felt themselves committed to the guidance of a Spirit which could lead into all truth. They took heed, indeed, to the sure word of prophecy, and cherished the sacred oracles; but they expected more revelations from the same source. They walked in the light that "shined in their hearts"; and they identified this light with the present indwelling Christ. It

was Paul's glory not to "know Christ after the flesh"; and he enjoins upon the believers that they give attention to "whatsoever things are true, just, pure, honorable, lovely, and of good report," and that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind. His converts, probably, did not have in their hands any record of the words of Jesus. His own letters and sermons make no reference to the gospel narratives; and his aim seems to have been to plant Christ in the heart by quickening the same spirit of sonship to the Father, and the same readiness to live and die in the service of truth and righteousness.

Why do we hesitate to give to Jesus the title of "Lord"? Simply because the term is now liable to be misunderstood. It should not mislead any one who reads in Oriental literature of Lord Moses, Lord Solomon, Lord Buddha, or Lord Mohammed; but, as the theologians insist that it signifies absolute Deity, it has become too ambiguous for the use of those who think of Jesus as a divine being and as the sharer as well as the leader of their worship. But the Unitarian conception of the Father as "the only and all-sufficient God" will be sadly impoverished if it does not include all the historic manifestations which Trinitarians attribute to the Son and all those gracious influences which they call the Holy Spirit.

The mistake of calling Jesus God seems to me far less harmful than the mistake of undervaluing the Divinity that wrought in his humanity; for it leads us to doubt or disparage the universal law of incarnation, which alone gives sanctity to life. And, if through Jesus we have been helped to a clearer discovery of our own high

rank as children of the Perfect Spirit, why can we not say with Paul that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"?

Our Leader, indeed! What can we do but follow him, so long as we desire to move in the same direction, and so long as we cannot get ahead of one who is so far in advance? We believe in him because our own personal experience verifies the truth which shone like sunlight in his own soul,—the truth which makes men free, yet binds them in happy loyalty to the highest law! We believe in him as the Teacher who lays open the realm of spiritual realities and bids us seek and find for ourselves. We believe in him as a glorious illustration of what the indwelling grace of God can do for a man. Most of all, we believe in him as one who has brought, and still brings, the fullest and richest disclosure the world has yet received of the love of God,—a love which seeks and attends us in all our lowness, imperfection, and sin, that it may cleanse, renew, and transform our lives, and perfect in us that quality of sonship which is our proper nature, and which is also the image of the Father.

For some of us, these ancient phrases may all be translated into "the Power behind evolution," or the "Power not ourselves," which makes not only for righteousness, but for every imaginable or unimaginable excellence and perfection.

We follow this leadership of Jesus because, up to this time, we have found no other such mighty aid to the evolution of a higher life for ourselves and for all humanity, and because his high calling sounds in our souls like heavenly music,—the ever-growing charm of the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.



## SALVATION BY CHARACTER.

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"If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. . . . Let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." I JOHN ii. 29; iii. 7.

"RIGHTEOUSNESS," or rightness, is the great word of the Old Testament, as "life" is of the New. Each interprets the other. Is a man truly and wholly alive so long as there is anything wrong about him? And, if he is created for the very highest form of life, will not that kind of life make him "a partaker of the divine nature"? It will follow that the purest human rectitude, or righteousness, is of the same quality with that from which it is derived and by which it is inspired and sustained. This must be what was meant by "walking with God," or having "fellowship with the Father." But we could not be called to be pure as heaven and perfect as God, unless we were offered the means of becoming so. To acquire a God-like character, this is our blessed and only business.

If we think a little, it may grow clear to us that this subject of Salvation by Character is closely related to the themes of two former discourses,—the Fatherhood and the Brotherhood. For the kind of character which makes a man safe in this universe must be such as to put him in due and orderly relations with the laws of the universe and with its whole population,—the beings above and around him. Later we may see how the

subject connects itself with the Leadership of Jesus and with rational ideals of life and destiny.

When we speak of a man of character, we mean a good character ; just as, when we call one lucky or fortunate, we mean that he has met with good luck or good fortune. When such words are used in a bad sense, we qualify them with an adjective ; and we speak of poor luck, ill fortune, bad character. Of course, the phrase "Salvation by Character" expresses our belief that a man of good character is safe, and that all that is necessary to make him safe is that he be sound at the centre,—“a good man,” such as would bear the scrutiny and win the approval of the Judge of all the earth.

This is no new doctrine. It is the teaching of Old Testament and New, and of all the great religions. Nothing is required by the highest law but that a man shall really be righteous, pure in his inward life, and thence pure in his outward life, like the good tree that brings forth good fruit. Easily said : is it easily done? It may mean vastly more than at first appears.

Character, good or bad, includes the sum total of permanent qualities that go to make the man. It is what he really is, not as his neighbors see him, not as he may see himself ; but as he really is, and as he must appear to the all-knowing Searcher of hearts.

A right character, such as secures safety or salvation, must have at the centre a fixed principle, a commanding sense of right, an overmastering conviction of duty, a purpose which is to the spirit of the man what vitality is to his body, and which corresponds also to perfect health.

A recent writer says : “God is a free moral agent. He can be evil if he chooses ; but he don't choose.

Saints in heaven can fall if they choose ; but they have no wish to fall. Every lost soul might repent ; but none ever will." This writer believes that all intelligent beings are endowed with moral freedom, and that in the exercise of this freedom some become confirmed in goodness, like that of God, while others are confirmed in evil, like that of the fabled fallen angels.

An ancient Poem of Creation tells us that the first man was tempted and fell. We have read also of a second Adam, founder of a more righteous race, who was tempted in all points, and fell not. Between these two extremes, what countless myriads have struggled and aspired, and sunk or risen, buffeting the waves, and clinging to any plank that might keep them afloat !

It is supposed that Jesus alone, of all who ever lived on this planet, could say in truth, "I do always the things that please the Father." If Salvation by Character depends on absolute sinlessness and there is no redemptive provision, the final harvest of souls must leave the upper heaven very thinly populated.

"He knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust." He neither exacts nor expects impossibilities from his creatures. For their weaknesses, exposures, and liabilities, he is more responsible than they. There is some reluctance to amend the creed which declares that men by nature are incapable of good. But the time has gone by when we could think of the Creator (to borrow an illustration) as leaving his infant child "on a plank, in mid-ocean, during an equinoctial storm, and telling him to pull for the shore !"

When we talk of Salvation by Character, we are not talking of impossibilities : we are dealing with man in all his physical, mental, and moral limitations, yet as a being

under considerate and just parental discipline. Perfection for such a being is a relative term. With all his imperfection, he is yet perfect in a true and reasonable sense, perfect like God when, like God, he is as good as his knowledge and power permit. But still his ideal of a higher perfection will compel him to "walk humbly."

"A man's reach must exceed his grasp: else what's a heaven for?" To falter through weakness, while aspiring and striving toward the best, is not to fail. The really "good men" of whom we read were of like passions with ourselves, and confessed their follies and faults. Indeed, such confession was a part of their goodness. In this transition state, we may call any man good who, amid all his besetting infirmities and hereditary disabilities, keeps steadily, though stumblingly, to his leading purpose of fidelity to such light as is given him, under whatever sky he was born, and in whatever code or worship he has been taught. He is a good sailor who holds his rudder true, however tossed by wind and wave.

The ancient oracles do not mislead us when they divide mankind into the righteous and the wicked; though when measured by an absolute standard, "there is none righteous; no, not one." It still remains true that character, such as is possible for us all, is the only basis on which we can build for happiness, welfare, or moral safety. The clean heart and the right spirit are the only essentials, and they are not unattainable.

This idea of Salvation by Character needs to be emphasized for a quite serious reason. It is to be feared that many have been looking for salvation in the wrong direction. They have been asking, "What will become of us?" when the more vital question is, "What ought we to become?" They have been seek-



ing for safety when they should have been seeking for soundness. They have been concerned to escape the consequences of sin rather than to escape from sin. This is much as if the sick man should be more anxious to be rid of pain than to be restored to health.

The traditional idea of religion needs to be clarified and rectified. When you hear that a man has become religious, what is the first thing you think of? Now he will be interested in doctrines, in ceremonies, in church life, in Sunday observance; and you suspect that his coming into the company will operate on the young people like a wet blanket. Of course, you give him credit for trying to become a better man; yet his religion is thought of as something non-natural,—not as the awakening of his proper life, not as the orderly and rational development of the man, not as the upspringing or outflowering of a seed planted in his being, growing with his growth and nourished by influences of truth and love which are provided like summer's light and warmth.

It cannot be said that a man is right in character because his actions are right on the outside: they must be right on the inside,—right in intention and motive. Many a useful action is done from policy or selfishness; and many an act done with evil intent brings a good result. It has been said that, if a man stabs another with intent to kill, but accidentally opens an abscess and saves the life he meant to destroy, he is not less a murderer; and we cannot even give him the credit of being a skilful surgeon.

Suppose that a man has committed some offence for which the judge has imposed a fine, and has sent him

to prison till the fine be paid. The court doesn't care who pays: any generous citizen can put down the money, and the prisoner will be set free. The man may be just as guilty as ever. But his legal status has been changed: the law treats him as innocent, and restores him to society. Shall we call him a "saved" man? Yes, saved from further punishment under the law, even though he may still be a lost soul,—a wanderer from the true way of life, perhaps not fit for heaven or earth,—like many of his neighbors who were never convicted.

This illustrates a superficial view of salvation which has been wide-spread in Christendom. All mankind, we are told, are under condemnation for breaking the law of God, which requires perfect obedience and spotless purity. No soul can escape, even by future good behavior; for the old debt stands on the books, and man has nothing to pay. God has been wronged out of so much service which was his just due; and the fiery dungeon claims its victim. Then, as if by a merciful afterthought, a scheme of salvation is brought forward. The Son of God, who is God himself, puts on a human form, and submits to bleed and die on a cross. On account of the dignity of the victim, his sufferings are accepted as a substitute for the execution of the penalty upon the race of guilty, helpless, and doomed apostates.

" God, the mighty Maker, died  
For man the creature's sin."

"Everlasting Justice struck the guiltless Son of God;  
And Mercy, smiling, bade the sinner go."

With this construction the gospel is presented to mankind as a proclamation of pardon to every offender who

will take advantage of the offered amnesty by putting in the plea that "Jesus paid it all," provided he will take in good faith an oath of future allegiance.

By this theory the moral government of the universe is simply an infinitely expanded absolute monarchy, of which every man is a rebellious subject, under sentence of endless imprisonment. What is called the plan of salvation gives the impression of a patch to cover an unexpected rent in the moral order. The magnanimity of the Sovereign provides indeed for human redemption, and for the restoration and cleansing of sinful souls, through repentance and faith in the atoning blood. So far as this regenerative process produces personal righteousness,—however clumsy the contrivance of the theologians,—it falls quite into harmony with the principle of Salvation by Character.

But now mark the mischief. The imagination of mankind has seized upon the alleged fact that *the fine has been paid* and the criminal let off by merely saying, "I accept the terms"; while the call to a life of loyalty has made no deep impression. The dramatic scene of the Crucifixion, as the supreme tragedy of history, has been portrayed thousands of times, and has melted millions of hearts. But emotion alone does not make character nor purify life. The superficial effect of such teaching on the population of Christian lands is a sad proof that a man may give full credit to the letter of gospel history, or to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and be no more saved from sin than the criminal is saved from guilt by being let out of jail.

The protest against this irrational and immoral perversion was needed in the interest of Christianity itself, which has suffered such a caricature. For Christianity

would be inferior to Judaism if it did not teach that "when the wicked man turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live." To confess and forsake our sins is to find mercy. When the prodigal returns a penitent, the elder brother has no need to bear the father's wrath or to suffer the penalty of transgression, in order to satisfy some theoretic demand of justice.

When the brethren say "salvation by faith in Christ," do they not really mean "Salvation by Character," or by a rectified personality? Suppose some modern rich man is convicted in conscience of making dishonest gains, and makes haste to restore, or put to some rational human use that which he has wrongfully called his own, might he not hope to hear the word of Jesus to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house"?

Suppose a soldier of the Salvation Army lays hold of a gutter drunkard,—a poor hopeless wretch, lost to society, to his family, to himself; suppose the apostle of faith, hope, and love takes him by the hand, and says, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" what is this but putting in practice the doctrine of Salvation by Character? The whole object is to restore the fallen one to self-possession, to the proper use of his faculties, and to reinstate him in self-respect. The whole business fails unless the appeal of light and love produces a response in the mind and heart and will; that is, unless the man is saved by the method of character.

Whether the human race has fallen from a primitive state of innocence or has never risen out of a semi-animal condition is a question on which the last word

may not have been said. Those of us who accept evolution as the historic process may yet admit that sinless innocence must have preceded any clear knowledge of the moral law, as is still true of infancy. We must also admit that, with the development of reason and conscience, all mankind have failed to conform perfectly to the perceived law of right, and thus in a very real sense have become fallen and sinful. But any man may stumble and fall, even when he is advancing along an upward path. We may, therefore, say that the sins of mankind are incidental to progress: they belong to the experience and discipline of beings imperfectly developed and imperfectly enlightened. We may still believe that the Creator is not disappointed in the outcome of his work and has not repented that he made man upon earth.

We must look in the face the tragic facts of sin, suffering, and retribution; for we all know them to be real from personal experience, observation, and history. They are not to be winked out of sight nor belittled.

But there is another and greater fact of which we also know something: "*There is plenteous redemption.*" There is ample provision for the fallen to rise and the sinful to be saved. Even the Mohammedans — who simply echo Christianity — say that "Islam is possible to every soul"; that is, none are so low that they may not rise, or so bad that they may not become good. *There is salvation to the uttermost; and it is by the way of character.* The curative power which heals our bodily hurts is busy with our deeper disorders.

But even the good man walks amid serious perils. The physicians warn us that a weak or sore spot, or a functional disorder of stomach, brain, or any organ, is

not to be treated as merely local ; that it may be only a symptom of some general ill condition, like impure blood or nerve-exhaustion. They prescribe "constitutional treatment," a systemic building-up. If the whole vital tone is low, the weakest part may be the first to give way ; and this may be the only part which we accuse of failure. But there is no complete health until we are clean and sound all through. And if any part is sick, every part may be impaired, either as a cause or as a consequence.

The body is never in fine running order or fullest force for work or resistance, unless it is rightly adjusted to the larger world of which it is a part, and in which it lives and moves and has its being. The mighty energies that are in the air and light, in heat, electricity, and chemic agency, all play through and through these physical frames of ours ; and, if we are in harmony with them, they are ministers of life, strength, and gladness. But if we break or mar our connections, these very forces will slay us or become our tormentors. Try what the beautiful fairy sun-ray will do to the inflamed eye, or what the purest air will do to the sick lung, or what wholesome food will do to the outraged and disabled stomach.

Let all this pass for a spiritual parable. Man does not live by the physical elements and forces alone. He lives by receiving and appropriating the fine and subtle influences of truth and love, which flow to him from the Lord and Giver of life. His moral energy is measured by his receptivity. His receptivity depends on use ; for he can take in only as he gives out. Both getting and giving depend on his keeping in harmony with the larger spiritual order to which he belongs,—in harmony with

the higher Spirit and all the open channels of communication through nature or grace ; in harmony with the laws which are at once his guides and protectors and their own avengers ; in harmony with humanity, by preserving in himself the spirit of loving good will and ready service, quite regardless of the attitude or animus of men toward himself.

"Do not impair the life-principle," said Napoleon to the physician. Character means moral vitality. To be indifferent or to parley with inferior standards threatens us with heart-failure. Our most common weaknesses spring from a sneaking desire to serve two masters,—to be "about right," and yet to avoid self-denial, to secure pleasure or profit that can only be had by some secret bargain with Satan. Just as we wish for bodily health yet weakly remain in bondage to the appetites and habits that invite disease.

Character is built up strongly by continuous discipline, by holding ourselves habitually to the best standards, by availing ourselves of the helps and opportunities which are set down in the programme of every day and every situation. Self-indulgence, negligence, or over-confidence, is fatal. The student who sees little value and feels little interest in books and instruction, for whom learning has only moderate attraction, and who catches no breath of inspiration from the college atmosphere and the emulation of intellectual comradeship, will probably go out as foolish as he went in. With suitable changes, the same formula may be filled out for every man and woman on earth. To be careless is to be characterless.

We may now see in clearer light the value of all "means of grace," or helps to improvement. No man can lift himself to higher moral conditions by sheer force of good resolutions. The bird does not rise alone by wings; there must be air. The mountain-climber must find at every step a place for his foot. And the human mind does not work in a void. In trying to think, it must think of something. The affections must clasp an object, actual or ideal. The will must be moved by some motive beyond mere willing; and its emotions must not waste themselves in aimless agitation.

In short, we make no gain in wisdom or in goodness—no advance in character—unless we put ourselves in relation and contact with the three worlds of which we are a part: with the world of nature, humanity, and God; with the realities of life which concern us, as thinking, loving, and acting beings. Character is not built out of nothing. Its foundation and superstructure require solid material, just as every tissue of our bodies must be packed with actual substance.

The test of character is fitness to the environment, the ability to live well in all circumstances, and especially the fitness for social adjustments. Can we live with other imperfect human beings usefully and happily, ready and willing both to give and to take such benefits and burdens as belong to the situation?

The environment also helps to make character. Every contact with men and things leaves its mark upon us. Our bodies are subject to a tremendous pressure from the atmosphere,—fourteen pounds to the square inch, the books tell us; yet we are not only able to bear this pressure, we really find our life in the air, and enjoy



every breath. The pressure from within balances that from without. There is a mightier social pressure ; and we need to be fitted both to resist it and to profit by it.

Much of this pressure takes the form of temptation,—a game we can all play at. We tempt and are tempted. Every word, look, or action, takes effect : we give each other our worst or our best. How much we need that central force of principle which makes it safe for us to be together !

To what influences and forces from without may we safely yield? Ah, we can quickly tell! We have learned by glad and sad experiences that in some companionships we are exalted and refined, in others we are depressed and coarsened. Yet it is not the companionship that helps or hurts : it is our way of taking it. We shall miss the benefit of the best if we are un-receptive : we shall take no harm from the worst if we are inwardly protected. Character is its own shield, its own antiseptic. The wise and good select by a kind of affinity or unerring instinct the things that are in harmony with wisdom and goodness ; and they reject the rest as a healthy taste rejects what is ugly or rotten.

Character never needs vindication : it is its own defence. If there should be a burglary in Roxbury, would anybody charge it to Edward Everett Hale? If the White House should be set on fire, would the detectives suspect Theodore Roosevelt? Yet so confused are the elements of this human world that the purest and best of men have been falsely accused and sent to the dungeon, the scaffold, the cross. Even thus, in the long run, character holds its own.

“ The hooting mob of yesterday with silent awe return  
To gather up the ashes into history’s golden urn.”

The earth-life is a school of character, and it is worth our while to take the whole course of study and training. Some say, "The sooner we are fit to become all spirit, the better." This opens the door to mischief. We have no right to disparage our bodies or our physical surroundings. Every man is an animal, with some modern improvements: a superior animal he should be by virtue of his psychical outfit.

"And flesh helps soul, now, much as soul helps flesh."

Body and mind belong together at every stage of the present life,—in education, industry, morals, religion. Complete character must take in the whole man. What death may do for us is none of our concern. We shall have our hands full if we mind our present business. To live wisely and thoroughly to-day cannot hurt our prospects for any possible to-morrow.

Yet, it may be, we are just now in danger of lowering our ideal through reaction from the excessive emphasis, which has been put upon mental development. We have been producing big heads, thin chests, dyspeptics, neurotics, and consumers of patent medicines. The pendulum swings the other way; and there is some contempt for weaklings, and admiration for feats of strength in the arena and prowess in the world of conflict.

There is growing demand for more out-of-door life, deeper draughts of air, plenty of sunshine, and free play of muscle; in short, for a return to whatever was good in the free life of savages. All this will count for a better basis of character unless we revive also some of the less lovely aspects of savage life, and lose the costly gains of refinement and a higher humanity. "I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection," says the apostle; or,

as a little maiden puts it, "we must keep the soul on top."

This supremacy of the higher nature is just what we mean by character and by salvation. Give us this supremacy, and all the forces of modern life may safely be directed to making the earth more fit for human uses as a home, a school, and a temple. There will be room for a noble worldly-mindedness; and we shall not be exhorted to leave business and attend to religion, but rather to attend religiously to business.

These seventy-five millions of Americans are said to be worth ninety billions of dollars. Is *that* all? So much manhood as there is, so much worth there is. Emerson calls men of character "the conscience of society." They admonish and restrain and inspire us all. The real wealth of the country is in the people who cannot lie, who will not steal, and who cannot be bought by any bribe offered to their self-love or their interest. The real poverty of the country is in that part of the population, learned or ignorant, high or low, who lack character, whose spirits go up and down with the weather and the markets, who are on the hunt for spectacles and sensations, who can find no good use for solitude, who put out their thinking to be done by the preacher, the political leader, or the journalist, and whom any wind can pick up and sweep along as it does the litter of the streets.

There is one kind of character about which we all think alike: it is open as the day because it has nothing to hide. It combines the boldness of the lion with the gentleness of the lamb. It is rooted and grounded in love. It suffers long and is kind; it envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave

itself unseemly ; seeketh not its own ; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It is ready for every good word and work, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. It is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good. We do not forget in what school we formed this ideal.

As we can have nothing better for our bodies than perfect health, so we need nothing for our souls but right character. But, as we have seen, it is not a light matter nor to be cheaply bought in any market. It costs everything else, and is worth all it costs. It is the product of all the finest forces of the universe,—a result of the long, steady working together of the Divine Spirit with the human. God alone never made a good man, as he never made a good book. Man alone never made himself good, as he never made his heart beat or his brain think. They must work together.

Right character is simply the result of habitually choosing what is seen to be morally the best. A steady traveller along the right road reaches his destination. Any man who will do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,—taking no glory to himself, but always ready for orders,—will be like the wise man who builds his house on the rock. He is helping all the time to make good society on earth ; he is fitting himself all the time, without much concern about it, for the best society in the universe,—for the company of the spirits of the just, made perfect. For it must forever be true that “no honest mind is without communion with God,” and that an honest man is his noblest work, the crowning glory of his creation.

## ENDLESS PROGRESS.

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"If children, then heirs; heirs of God." — ROM. viii. 17.

"HEIRS of God"! Let us ponder this amazing phrase. It expresses an inference from the doctrine of the Fatherhood. "*If children, then heirs* ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We have here the Christian conception of the destiny of all who share that kind of life which is spiritual and indestructible. The fortunes of the human family are thus brought before us for contemplation. All questions of the future are open questions; for "it doth not yet appear what we shall be," even on the morrow. But we are forelighted by experience, by the provisions of our nature, and by all we know of the order of the world. We may also be advised by the sages and seers,—by the great voices of those who have communed most deeply with the realities of existence.

All men are the offspring of God, but not all men have the *sense* of sonship: this comes only through a spiritual awakening. The unborn child is unconscious: it does not breathe, or think, or feel; but the potentialities of complete life are latent. There is a second birth—quite as natural, and more marvellous—by which we come to breathe and think and feel as spirits; an unfolding of our deeper nature. To promote this new life is the special aim of Christian teaching, and under any system of religion it is the true method of progress,

But there are many stages of development. Emerson says: "We wake, and find ourselves on a stair. There are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight." What are these stairs? Ascending stages of experience. Not only do we mount to higher levels of faculty, we also reach new resources and values, we become susceptible of new joys and new sorrows. We come in sight of wider regions of being; we are occupied with higher ranges of interest; we engage in new and nobler activities. From childhood to youth, and on through middle age to maturity, who has not found this true?

It is evident that we are living in a wide universe. Indeed, it appears to be boundless. We are living in it, and know it. The birds, beasts, and creeping things do not know it, therefore they continue on a stationary plane: they make no progress. They see no stairway above or below; they look neither forward nor backward. But we are haunted by "thoughts that wander up and down eternity." We are in a wide universe; we know it, and we believe that we are here to stay. But not to stay still. We are capable of great changes and improvements; and such changes we call progress.

"Lay your ear close to yourself, and listen," says Montaigne. A Hebrew sage had said long before, "A man's mind is sometimes wont to tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above in a high tower." Back of all our thinking, feeling, and willing is That which thinks and feels and wills. Even when thought, feeling, and volition are suspended,—as in sleep or swoon,—we know that Life is there in full force, ready to resume business. Each one of us can

say, "I"; "I think, and feel, and will, and remember — or forget." What is this "I"? A form of life; a living and conscious being.

This conscious being is on the stairs. Every upward step takes him higher, even though he stumbles. One result is that what was impossible yesterday becomes possible to-day. With every step we surmount an obstacle, overcome a difficulty, win a victory. Why not say that with every advance we take further possession of what was already ours, through our heredity from God? A man who is climbing a mountain begins to take possession when he starts. What he leaves behind as he rises is still his; his actual attainment includes all he seems to be leaving behind; and what he has yet to gain is already his in hope or expectation.

The title to our inheritance is not impaired by our inability to measure its value. The Father's bestowals are not limited by the child's comprehension. Our poor little thinkings do not affect his generous purpose. Theory is often inadequate; but it never hurts a fact. Whatever the astronomer may say, there are the stars. Whatever may be the guesses of the geologist, the rocks abide. The physicians are often bewildered; but we have our living flesh and blood. So let theologians, churches, and creeds have their freest say, and let us accept or question whatever we must: we shall still be sure that man is here in the universe. He knows it, and he knows himself. "Let him doubt what he will, he cannot doubt that he doubts!" He is here! And, whatever puzzles beset us, there are the stairs below us, and the stairs above us. We are like the living creatures of John's vision, "full of eyes, before and behind."

Let us keep looking, both ways by turns ; but mostly forward.

There are many proofs that man is in a continuous process of creation. His faculties show a progressive development. He is ever finding larger uses for them. His ideals are enlarged and elevated by experience. His thoughts, affections, interests, and activities widen their range and deepen their quality. How much more we care about and live for than in our childhood and early youth ! How much may this mean ? It means, at least, that *our being is laid out on a large scale, that it is written all over with promises not yet fulfilled, and that there is no visible limit to the possibility of growth.*

Let us look at the subject in two quite different aspects : first, the general progress of the human race on the earth during successive generations ; next, the possible progress of a spiritual society and its members in a future state of existence. Tremendous themes ! Our minds move through a sea of difficulties, where thought goes "sounding on its dim and perilous way," and every inquiry is at once a confession of ignorance and a prayer for light.

I. Science traces the development of mankind from low animal conditions, and calls it evolution. Long, slow, complicated processes of change—physical, biological, psychical—led up to humanity, and fitted and furnished the planet to be the scene of our history. Then progress enters on a new method. The Creator takes man into partnership, saying : "Help me make things. Help make yourself and the world. Behold, I have given you understanding and power ! " But, as the



Creator himself has been in no hurry, he cannot expect rapid results from his still feeble creature. The upward stairway is long and steep. No part of the race has made rapid progress in intelligence, in virtue, or in civilization. It seems likely that there are some lessons of wisdom that can be learned and practised only through long and costly experiments, many failures, and bitter disappointments.

We know now that it is a sad mistake to over-stimulate a child, or to attempt to force a backward people to take on a higher type at once. All the high and enduring forms of life are slow in coming to maturity. That "infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed" has taken immeasurable time to form and people this little world, and will doubtless take immeasurable time to carry forward the never-finished creation. Could power and wisdom be better occupied?

What thousands or millions of our years were taken to mould the globe from fire-mist and formless void; to cool and crystallize the granite crust; to condense and separate and gather the gases into the ocean and atmosphere; to sculpture the hills and mountains, and plough the channels of the streams; to grind the strata and mix the material for soils; to plant the plains and forests with green and growing things! And, after all these ages, there still was not a man to till the ground! Had any time been wasted?

Yet progress has been comparatively rapid since this human animal caught the trick of standing erect, learned the use of his hands, and began to realize that life is a science, or something to be learned, and an art, or something to be practised, and that the world is rich in resources of which he is born heir and master.

Still more rapid was the progress when men could put their heads and hands together; when they found that all are wiser and stronger than one; and when the generations were enriched by savings and accumulations.

Every tool or trade, every labor-saving invention or subdivision of service, every house, road, or ship, every animal tamed and trained to human use, every newly harnessed power of nature that could turn a wheel, has been a contribution to the general advancement. Much more must this be said of the institutions that represent associated life,—the stable family, the school, the temple of religion. They are all imperfect still, but once they were impossible.

We are not less heirs of God because we inherit from each other, or because we are heirs of all the ages. The stores of knowledge, the verified results of human observation and research, the treasures of wise maxims and traditions, the codes of morals and of civil law, — are not these parts of *his* ways, as well as of ours? See by what infinite and loving patience the beastly and hairy savage has been tamed, cleaned up, combed, trained, and made useful to himself! He thinks himself civilized and enlightened now, and does not like to believe that he came up out of the muck and mire, even though some of it still clings to his body and mind! Think how many stairs have been toilsomely climbed to bring us to a landing where the truths and laws once known only to a few sages and seers are brought within easy reach of every aspiring youth over a large part of the earth! And the stairs before us still go on and up, and out of sight. Why should there ever be a limit to the possibilities of human progress on earth?

But hold! For this is not a simple question to be

answered by our wishes and hopes. What if we sweep through a curve to come round to the same point? So have taught the seers of India. They say that in a remote age men grew to the enormous stature of forty feet and lived a thousand years; that a gradual decline set in, and will continue till the race is dwarfed to a few inches and life shortens accordingly; that at last earth and skies will vanish, and the Creator himself will sleep through a night as long as his active day has been; after which he will wake, and will send forth anew the mighty order of worlds and living beings which are emanations of his eternal being. To him these inconceivable alterations of creation and destruction are no more than pulse-beats.

Science discredits the permanence of those physical conditions which make the earth habitable for living beings, and predicts the gradual running down of the cosmic clock-work. The light and heat stored in the sun must finally be spent, and then our planet—like every other—will die into a cold stone, like the moon. This remote probability need not affect the present price of real estate, nor check the long and indefinite expansion and improvement of mankind; but it must qualify our hope of *endless* mundane development, and confine our talk of progress within certain or uncertain limits.

Our optimism is sobered by another consideration. Emerson, in a mood of ludicrous extravagance, describes Thoreau as a man who “in a short life exhausted the capacities of this world”! Possibly, a few have lived who got out of life the essence of its benefits,—all that was within their reach in their time, as some famous scholars are said to have mastered all the learning then available. But the branches of learning continually mul-

tiply, and every branch grows more fruitful. There is no limit yet apparent to the physical, intellectual, and spiritual resources of humanity. But it is easily possible to overdo, as well as to underdo; and even the most orderly normal progress may at length come up to a boundary which cannot be passed. *The bank may break*; or, at least, mankind may "exhaust the capacities of this world" in dead earnest. There seems at present more danger that we shall exhaust our own capacities by various over drafts and excesses.

Still, progress is the order of the day, as it has been and is to be, in the world's long history. It is true that nations and civilizations, like individuals, have their phases of childhood, youth, maturity, and decline; and the most vigorous stocks run out. But may we not say, for our comfort, that the race, as a whole, has been enriched by its own losses? The dead empires and systems have left their deposit, and new life has sprung from their decay. The gains have been cumulative, as well as costly. To be "heir of all the ages" is no small fortune; and we occupy a real vantage-ground, standing on our fathers' graves. Thus, within certain vague limits, and with many fluctuations and set-backs, the ages have witnessed a large advance of the straggling human procession. Progress on the earth may go on, if not infinitely, yet indefinitely.

II. May we reasonably hope for endless progress in an endless life beyond this transient scene? We are told that whatever has a beginning must have an end. But did our spiritual substance ever have a beginning? Was there ever a time when it was *not*? Before the

foundation of the world, must it not have been hidden in God? In a sense, we have had many beginnings and endings; but, *absolutely*, is not the generation of our sonship and heirship from everlasting to everlasting? Why may we not go on living as long as our Father lives, as long as we draw existence from his exhaustless fulness, as long as the primal Cause operates unspent?

Endless? Can we foresee any terminus to the road which the soul travels? In our highest states of thought and feeling, when consciousness is cleared of clouds and disorders, is not the persuasion of our permanance most sure and confident? Tennyson confides to us that in his most exalted moods non-existence seemed "a laughable impossibility." The road before us opens and widens, on and up!

After George Eliot lost her hope of immortality, she cried out in a passion of defeated aspiration, "What great things we could do, *if we only had time!*" That is, progress might indeed be continuous if life could be; we might then grow forever in knowledge, wisdom, goodness, power, and joy. Grant immortality, and we feel ourselves capable of endless advances.

Such expansive powers are lodged in our souls, as if waiting their opportunity! We see and feel that God might do everything for us, might make everything of us. Does he tantalize and mock his creatures, or are we really children and heirs? Dr. Peabody, when in Rome, looked on the frescoed effigies of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and they affected him like representations of high personages, long exercised in wisdom and goodness, matured in power by the discharge of great trusts, and educated by ages of intimate communion with the Almighty. Are there no such beings in the universe?

Mohammed reports that he saw, in his visit to heaven, an angel of such vast proportions that his eyes were seventy thousand days' journey apart! The greatness of Jesus has sometimes been explained by supposing that he was "the first-born of every creature," "the beginning of the creation of God," who through countless æons has been gathering into himself the elements and forces of divinity, so that he exercises the delegated power of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. And still "he must increase"!

These are not arguments: they are harmless fancies; helpful, too, if they prompt us to larger ways of thinking. All noble fiction expands and clears our views of human nature; and the grotesque imagery of mythology falls far short of the realities that may by and by be as familiar to us as this common world, which in our infancy was inconceivable. What can be too good to be true, too great to be hoped for, or too high to be reached by the "heirs of God"?

Flesh and heart fail: body and brain go back to their kind; but is there any such limitation to

"The soul that, born of God,  
Pants to see his glorious face"?

Our hope of endless life and growth rests on the identity of man's deeper or spiritual nature with the divine nature, which is Love and Wisdom, and which it consciously partakes whenever it becomes loving and wise. To as many as receive this principle, the Spirit bears witness that they are children of God, "and if children, then heirs."

How passionately men have desired to find the key of destiny! How welcome, then, should be the message

which brings life and immortality to light by stirring in us the sense of our kinship to the Eternal! Yet Jesus is but a forerunner,—one of many who have felt themselves caught up into the assured possession of divine life, so that even in the body they felt themselves to be inhabitants of the world which eye hath not seen. Certainly, we can know nothing of a spirit world, unless we live as spirits; but we can know much if we do so live. And to live as spirits is to grow in that wisdom and love which constitute the spiritual life of man and God.

But what if we do *not* so live? Is it possible to go *down* the stairs,—down into deepening darkness, as well as up into the perfect day? The Christian world is facing with tremulous interest this problem of conditional immortality, and wondering what awful meaning there may be in the Scripture which says, “There is a sin unto death.” To be persuaded of the annihilation of spirits confirmed in evil is indeed a welcome relief to those who have held the hideous traditional doctrine of endless and hopeless torment.

Victor Hugo tells how Dante once wrote two lines, and left them on his table. Said one of the lines, “I feel that I shall be immortal.” Said the other, “I have no such feeling.” When the poet returned, he drew his pen through the second line. Is there in some men a kind of life that persists, and in others a kind of life that fails, because it has not acquired the God-quality of wisdom and love? When Lincoln was asked if he thought some men immortal, and others not, he was silent for a moment. Then he answered, “All, or none.” It is here that we trust the larger hope.

Yet we know by woful experience that there is a downward way, from which every step must be retraced

with penitence, pain, and toil. Our only safety is in yielding to the upward drawing which gently solicits us like a still small voice.

The dog is said to be a converted wolf, a creature partly made over by contact with a superior being. And we,—what hope of large spiritual improvement except as we are attracted by a Life that is higher and purer than our own? Does not all progress come from being “led by the Spirit”? The Spirit may be embodied or disembodied. We are touched to finer issues, we know not how.

“The tidal wave of deeper souls  
Into our inmost being rolls,  
And lifts us unawares.”

I believe, what I cannot prove, that we are affected by a vast realm of spirit-influence, because the universe is all a-throb with vibrations and energies that are the product of *life*. The stars are far apart, yet they are not separated: they attract and are attracted; they clasp hands across the measureless spaces. Are we separated from those above—or below? There are drawings both upward and downward, and we must choose. If we are true and pure, we shall help to lift the sunken: we shall be saviors.

We can dream of a life essentially like this, yet ever ascending; free as the light, fresh as the morning, young as the sun. But we have not yet grown to it. Little blame; yet blame enough to spur us out of carelessness and sloth. But there is time enough: there is all the lifetime of God, which may be a part of our inheritance.

Ask the oldest man, Do you see or feel any reason



why you might not keep on living with ever-increasing interest, if there were no bodily clog? "He died learning," was the epitaph chosen by Green, the English historian. And J. H. Thom asks of you and me, "Who would not like to carry into eternity an ever-purer stream of conscious being?"

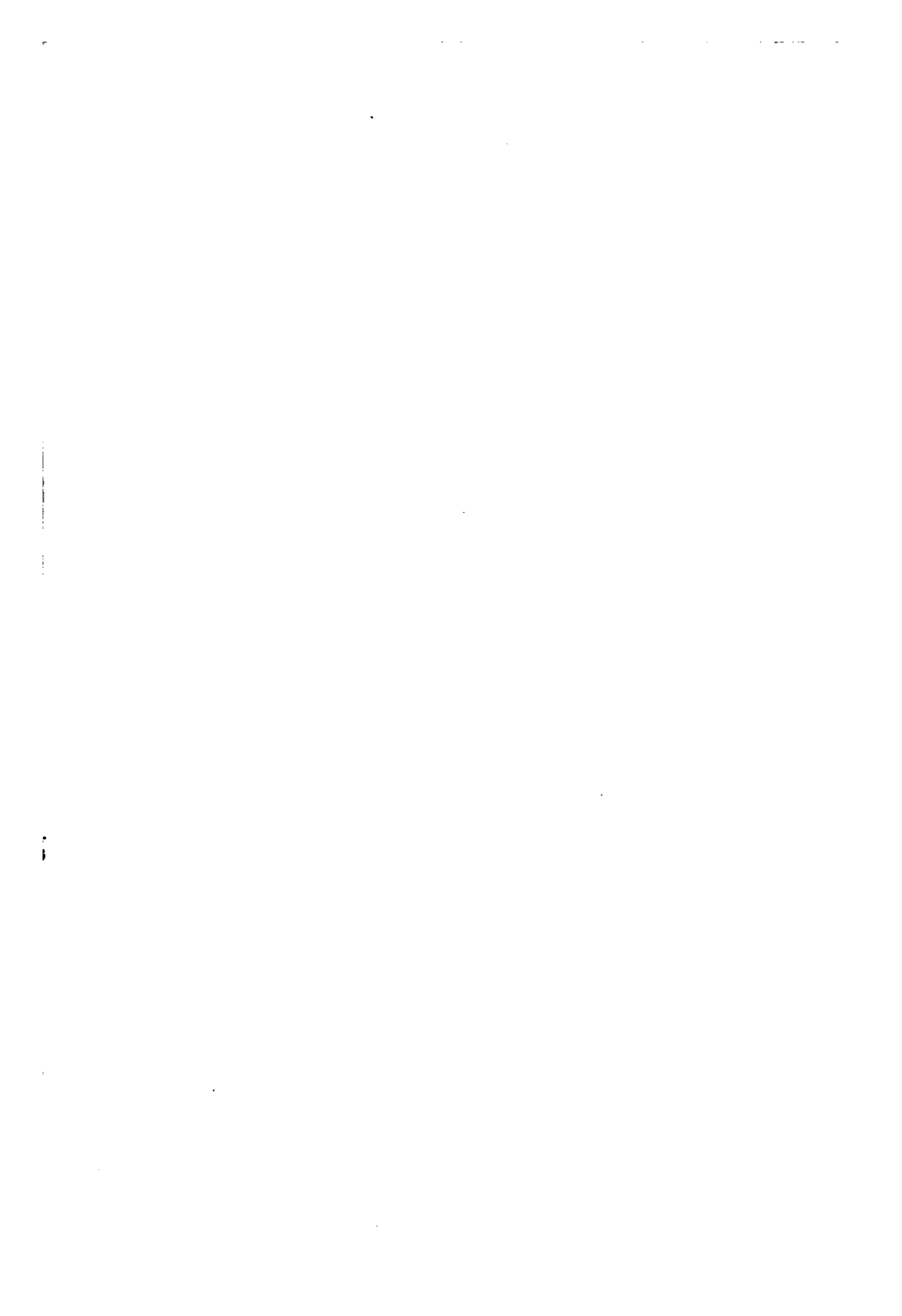
"The Progress of Mankind onward and upward Forever" seems adequately provided for: 1. In the fulness, adequacy, and good will of the infinite, mysterious, all-producing Energy which we call God, and which Jesus has taught us to trust as our Father. 2. In the constitution of man as a spiritual being,—receiver, sharer, heir of the immanent, deathless divinity. 3. In the ordered amplitude of the universe. There is room enough for endless expansion, without crowding; time enough, without haste; resources enough, without stinting. Plato, dimly glimpsing the Christ-doctrine of the Fatherhood, calls the world "the product of the divine *ungrudgingness*." To that exhaustless generosity—that mercy which endureth forever—we may safely trust the destiny, as we trace the origin, of every creature born to bear the image of the Creator.

There are deep things of God: push out from shore!  
 Hast thou found much? Give thanks, and look for more.  
 Dost fear the generous Giver to offend?  
 Then think his store and bounty have no end.  
 He needeth not to be implored or teased;  
 The more we take, the better he is pleased.

Nor is it alms, dispensed in high disdain;  
 He loses nothing: 'tis his only gain  
 To make thee rich. What can he do but give?  
 Since there's not one from whom he may receive.  
 He quitclaims nothing: what's bestowed on thee,  
 Immortal Child, stays in the family.

This exercise of giving out his wealth  
Preserves him fresh in everlasting health.  
For how should Goodness be the Perfect Good,  
If Goodness slept, nor cared for his own brood?  
But Love and Wisdom, kept in circulation,  
Are life, and light, and law, for all creation.

What service can we render Thee, kind Heaven,  
But freely take what is so freely given?  
Best gift of all is wit to keep the cup,  
Wherein Thou pourest blessing, right side up.  
Dwell Thou within us, Lord of Charity,  
And we, from Thee, shall endless givers be.







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